

#77

pg 9
line 5

To: General Assembly Appropriations Committee

From: James LoMonaco, President Organization of Administrative Faculty CSUS

Date: February 28, 2011

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the appropriations proposal for the Connecticut State University system for the coming biennium. Before discussing the specifics of the Governor's proposal I would like to take a moment to review what has occurred over the past 20 years with the advent of "Flexibility" beginning in the early 1990's. Perhaps I should go back further than that. I've been employed by Eastern Connecticut State University since 1974 in a variety of direct service functions for students. Currently I serve as President of the Association that represents the direct service professionals who support and advise students as they pursue their chosen courses of study. When I arrived in 1974 what existed was a struggling and threadbare system of four regional teachers colleges under the control of OPM, Central State Purchasing and DAS. Despite the needs that were so apparent for facilities, additional teaching and support staff for students it was very difficult to make many positive changes as a consequence of the indifference and lack of knowledge on the part of the above mentioned entities.

In the early 1990's the General Assembly in concert with the Governor made a decision to try a bold experiment in improving all of Public higher Education in Connecticut by allowing the three systems to manage their own budgets with an appropriated block grant, setting tuition levels and utilizing the funds gained from auxiliary operations to develop each campus and its respective programs. Later in the decade the General Assembly approved plans for significant facility improvements for UConn, CSUS and the CCC's. The result has been nothing short of a complete turnaround in Higher Education. For CSUS this has meant the opportunity to turn struggling teacher training institutes into a high quality system of four comprehensive Universities that provide an excellent education to our students, support the workforce needs of Connecticut at prices that are well within reason for our region and our state. None of this would have been possible without the decision of the General Assembly to make the original investment and effort to achieve the current outcome. Now, in the Governor's proposed budget there are elements that may threaten this excellence now that we find ourselves in a fiscal crisis that is not of our making.

As citizens we expect that there will need to be consideration by staff around concessions to assist Connecticut as the state works out of the current crisis. However the provision (Sec. 12) that allows the Office of Policy and Management to extract any labor/management savings created by employee concessions from the budget of a university. If this is done it could conceivably extract far more than the 10+% cut to the Block grants proposed by the budget. Should that occur the damage to programs and operations of the Universities could be severely compromised if not crippled. Higher Education is not simply a manufacturing undertaking that can reduce capacity by cutting production a bit. More than

anything else careful planning is essential to the successful delivery of quality education services to our Students. Ninety two percent of who are Connecticut residents.

A second provision in the document (Sec. 41) the President of the new Board of Regents in concert with the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management to transfer up to 15% percent of a University budget to another entity for any purpose. Again this sort of undertaking must be done with meticulous planning and care in order not to damage a particular institution. It should be noted that the programs of CSUS work across the curriculum and intentionally provide a comprehensive education to our students. We are not, nor should we be simply vocational schools.

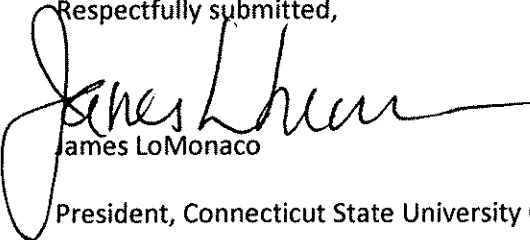
The increase of rescission authority is also troubling as it could provide another instance in which devastating cuts could be made in the programs of a particular campus without taking into account the consequences. Should this stand it may well also thwart the intentions of the Legislature in the achievement of certain outcomes that had been desired by the General Assembly. It is important to maintain the structure that allows the plans of the General Assembly to be completed as enacted.

Particularly troubling for our members is the provision (Sec. 16) that Position Control Authority is removed from the purview of the constituent units of Higher Education and given to the Office of Policy and Management. The charge has been made that "excessive hiring of non-faculty positions requires more oversight." Given the enormous increase in facilities, programs, campus residences and related student activity and dining functions some additional hiring should come as no surprise. The explosion in Information Technology and its use in the classroom have placed enormous demands on each campus for the support of Faculty, students as well as the overall operation. The increase in facilities themselves requires additional staff to maintain them as keeping them in good condition will in the long term control costs.

Essentially the campuses of CSUS are small cities that require seven day, twenty four hour support in order to assure the well being of the campus communities. All of which takes staff to perform essential functions. I urge the members of the Appropriations Committee to carefully assess the governance proposal as it is enormously important that the already invested billions in Connecticut Public higher Education be protected for the benefit of Connecticut and its students. While I expect that change is and should be a part of modern life planning should include all parties not just the powerful. Given the opportunity we can be of great assistance as we jointly seek to find a way out of the current crisis. Tomorrow will come and Connecticut needs to be prepared.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James LoMonaco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

James LoMonaco

President, Connecticut State University Organization of Administrative Faculty